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Reading Reflections Combination Chapters

UbD Chapter 6 and 7, MI Chapter 5 and 6

Chapter 6 in UbD discusses how a teacher should have reactive lesson plans. The chapter explains that secondary education teachers could expect around or over 160 different students a year (multiple classes) which means meeting the individual needs of each student would be daunting. To ease the stress that might come from facing the challenge, the chapter suggests looking for patterns in the classroom. An example could be multiple students each year who have trouble reading. Having a back-up lesson plan that helps those students could be used each year and would solve multiple student problems in one go. I like the analogy the chapter uses to discuss unintended solutions from one problem solving. The book hints that if I come up with a plan to help students who have difficulty reading, the same strategy might also help students with difficulty hearing or students whose first language is not English.

Chapter 7 in UbD discusses how to engage students in learning and lead them into class discussions or deeper thought. As a teacher I should ask questions that would point them in the direction or goal of the information I am providing them with. This can be both helpful to students who need direction or prompting to answer questions and cover material quicker in the classroom while providing in depth thought. The chapter also discusses WHERETO framework which will be helpful in future classrooms. The main principle of the WHERETO framework is to encourage teachers to think like a learner.

Chapter 5 in MI discusses once again the importance of escaping the linguistic and logical only classroom structure and branching out into the different intelligences. The chapter details a seven step process that will create lesson plans for each type of intelligence. There are no set rules to how to create an MI lesson plan other than to provide a meaningful and structured lecture or activity. Overall I felt the chapter did not differentiate much from previous chapter readings. However, it gave a huge number of activity examples or suggestions to use with each intelligence.

Chapter 6 in MI expands on the previous chapter and develops teaching strategies for each of the intelligences. Instead of using generic ideas for linguistic, the author chooses different ideas like storytelling or brainstorming that are often neglected in the classroom. I believe the author is trying to push teachers into exploring new ideas and strategies in the classroom. As a teacher we should not be bound by the wall of No Child Left Behind and focus only on standards and tests. At the same time we do not need to come up with super complex and overt strategies for the class. A classroom theater activity might be a little elaborate for daily use but picture metaphors could be a simple activity used in the class to help the spatial intelligence students out. And worst case scenario is the activity is not used again if it does not benefit the students.

MI Chapters 7, 9, 13, 14

When I think about classroom environment I think of how a classroom is set up physically. Chapter 7 takes the concept in a completely different direction. Classroom environment does not just concern itself with how a room is set up but the atmosphere as well. The chapter focuses on linguistic as an example. As a teacher if I am talking at too high or low of a vocabulary level, students could be put off (feel discouraged, intimidated, bored etc.). As a teacher I need to take the time to create a working environment for the student that is appealing to all the different intelligences. One helpful way to encourage the different intelligences is to set up activity stations. Although this may be a little more difficult in a secondary education setting, I could use stations as a way to give students multiple choices on what classwork to complete. I could group them according to their intelligence preference and assign a quadrant of the room to several different intelligences.

Sometimes working on the MIs in the classroom is not enough. Chapter 9 discusses methods that can be used school wide to improve the learning conditions outside of linguistic and logical. The students would have specialists who would help direct projects or help them find resources specific to their intelligence preference. However, the book encourages the idea that each student is exposed to all forms of intelligence and not kept to their strengths. In my future school I hope to be able to encourage the school to introduce some of these methods if they are not already in place.

Chapter 13 deals with three areas of interest not yet covered in the book. Computer technology is an area that has potential for any of the intelligences. The book stresses that computers are intelligence neutral which means that anyone has the potential to use them and are not relegated to “nerds.” The chapter also discusses the cultural diversity of the classroom and how this diversity can be a point of discussion about different ways intelligences are valued in other cultures. The chapter makes the point that as educators we should be wary of specifying intelligences for other cultures as each culture has strengths in all intelligences. The last section involves introducing career choices for students. The key for the earlier stage is to let the students come up with what they want to pursue rather than dictating a career for them based on their intelligence strengths. The book suggests brining students on field trips to expose but not direct their choice for a career.

Despite existential intelligence not being classified as a full intelligence, I will still work with it in the classroom. The goal of multiple intelligence is to build each student’s strength and weaknesses while being adaptable to each student’s needs. There is enough of a foundation for the existential intelligence to create some class activities around it. Even if the intelligence may be overshadowed by the others, it can only help the students to be exposed to other ideas.

UbD Chapter 8 and MI Chapters 8, 11 and 12

Chapter 8 of UbD discusses the upsides and downsides of the grading and reporting system used in schools today and how to use them with backwards design and differentiated instruction. I thought it was interesting that the chapter pointed out the need to grade on content rather than the extraneous “fog” often considered in a student’s grade. I remember many of my papers would get marked down if I forgot my name or other methods of communicating my work rather than just simply the content I covered in the assignment. I hope in my future classroom to design assignments that encourage the successful communication (and the writing of names) of the material while only grading or evaluating the content. The rest of the chapter seemed to focus on how evaluating students can be more effective with more assignments and less dependency on the average of scores. The average does not provide a great means of evaluating a student. The book suggests putting more stock in the final assignments after students have built up a mastery rather than initial assignment grades due to the student still gaining mastery.

Chapter 8 of MI discusses various methods for classroom management and how to incorporate the MI’s into management explanation. I think the most critical part of the chapter for me was the discussion on how to match the strategy for each student. To express and idea to a student does not necessarily need to focus on his or her strongest intelligence. Sometimes a student will learn or understand material better if it comes from their weaker intelligence and will benefit while developing the intelligence.

Chapter 11 on MI discusses the use of MI with learning disabilities and how disabilities are viewed in the society today. The critical point to take from this chapter is to focus on the positive strengths that those with learning disabilities have and expand from there. Too often do we as teachers and as humans focus on the negative and try to improve it. The MI says that a far more effective and moralizing method is to use the strengths and positives each of us possess and use them in class. The MI method of teaching would be a huge benefit because it would cause teachers to find alternative methods of assignment and assessment to evaluate and teach those with learning disabilities.

In chapter 12 in MI, the discussion revolves around the use of MI in memory. Teachers should teach different methods of memorization based on a student’s strength in a particular intelligence. I think this can be critical for the early stages of learning in a classroom. Memorizing information rapidly can be useful but it needs to be reinforced with application. The chapter encourages this idea with the merging of MI theory with Bloom’s Taxonomy. Memorization is only the first stage in the process (knowledge). Later stages take the information memorized and apply them to class activities and projects.

Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10 FIAE

Over several chapters now the issue of how ineffective (yet required) grades are in the classroom. However, chapter 7 discussed grades in a unique way that I have not thought about before. How does a single grade letter tell a parent, student or teacher how well a student understands a wide variety of topics in one particular class? Often times I have received a paper back from a professor and all the feedback is a simple letter B. I have absolutely no idea what I did wrong. The grade does not describe to me all the flaws of the paper or tell me what I did correctly. Chapter 7 goes on to explain how grades are opinionated. Teachers often grade very differently from each other and can often be influenced by the student writing it. As a teacher we need to understand a student’s background when working on it. The chapter says to adjust grades based on student backgrounds while maintaining the integrity of the grade.

Chapter 8 discusses the reasons for why we grade. The chapter immediately divides grading into two groups. We grade because we want to document student and teacher progress, provide feedback, and inform instructional decisions. The other side of grading is to motivate, punish and sort students. The book favors the first three because it is the positive aspects of grading. As a future teacher I hope to work towards these goals to provide meaning to my grades rather than one more way of manhandling students to do their work.

Chapter 9 discusses the appropriate time to grade students. The critical point made by the chapter is that not all students are ready for grading or assessing what they know at the same time. This makes timing of tests and what we expect on tests critical. One example used in the reading is retaking a test but without the ability to get a 100. This is done so students who did master the material “on time” do not lose out. However, this can be punishing to students who had not been able to master the material at the appointed time despite working hard to do so. Homework is also important. Trying to teach through homework will only hurt students in the long run and may cause them to learn the material incorrectly.

Chapter 10 discussed policies for retaking tests or assignments and how to grade them. I thought this chapter was interesting because of all the good and bad policies mentioned I have had at least once. I particularly like the reason for not averaging retaking of tests with the original test. As a future teacher I do not yet know what I will have for a test retake policy. However, I will always pick the larger of two grades for a student’s test redo. Another policy I will adapt is not allowing redoing of work close to grade closing. The chapter reasons that it is important for teachers to be focused on getting the big grades in and not getting distracted by student requests. I see it as a way to get students prepared for the closing weeks early so they can focus on other issues like the final test or other classes where they are struggling.

FIAE Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10 Syntheses

**Synthesis**

Chapter 7 of FIAE kicked off a discussion on the meaning behind the grade. A lot of block one recognized the impact grades (especially failing grades) have on student performance. In addition, the block focused on the idea that grades should show mastery of a subject and any attempts that do not show master should also not be graded. Ashley Godbout highlights two ways schools have avoided failing students and instead focused on mastery of the subject: “Some school districts follow an [A, B, C](http://www.usinspect.com/blog/abcs-grading), I scale where I represents incomplete and there is “failing” grade. Another school includes A, B and “you’re not done”. These are two great examples of fostering that idea that grades show mastery.”  
  
For chapter 8 of FIAE, most of block one focused on the positive side of grading. For the most part the block recognized the need for teachers to use grading as a way of giving feedback to the students on the work that they have done. According to block one, students should get more than just a letter grade, the response should include positive things they have done and constructive response on how to do better. Cole summarizes best the dark side to the grading system used in schools today: “And we have a system that, annually, weeds out more students, which fails more students, which discourages more students from learning, than ever before.” As teachers we need to use grading as a tool to keep students in school and motivated rather than a method of getting rid of poor students.  
  
Chapter 9 of FIAE brought out a little disagreement in the classroom. Most of block one agrees that grading homework is not something that should be done. Homework is practice and students should not be subject to summative assessment. Russell puts it best: “Every other assignment (not tests/projects/etc.) is about working with the student to aid their learning, not to judge them on their retention of material.” However, some practicum students voiced concern that if 0s or incompletes are not acceptable, there should be some method for keeping students responsible for completing their homework.  
  
With chapter 10 focusing around redoing or making-up missed or failing assignments, most of block one was in agreement. Students should be given the opportunity to in some method redeem poor classwork. While each member of block one came up with a variation, there was consensus on the core meaning. Tyler Michaud stated a key point concerning the redoing of grades: “Every teacher has a different policy for their classroom and grades and that is not necessarily a bad thing, it just means that every teacher needs to make sure that their own practice is clear to the students and themselves; as long as their policy is consistent and fair it should yield positive results.” Whether or not a teacher allows for work to be redone, it is important that the students know ahead of time the policy or method that the teacher will grade.

FIAE Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14

Chapter 11 in FIAE focuses on the impact of the grading scale. The initial discussion is how to handle 0s in the grade book. I thought this was the most significant part of the chapter because it tackles a highly disputed issue. The single benefit of using zeros is to punish students who do not turn in homework. And anyone in the psychology field knows that punishments will only get you so far in removing a behavior. Some teachers use 0s as a “motivator” to get students to complete the homework or assignment. I think the book highlights a perfect strategy to use when dealing with 0s when grading time comes around. 0s or other missing work should be given a 60. This means a student can receive a more accurate grade without getting credit for doing no work. The teacher should then come up with other strategies to get students motivated to complete the assigned work.

The grading scale is discussed in chapter 12. Rick Wormeli compares and contrasts percentage based grading with small scale grading. Percentage based learning is often more mathematical in finding a student’s grade and is more “accurate.” Small scale grading can often better reflect student mastery of a subject. Wormeli highlights the fact that teachers will guestimate what a student should receive as a grade based on information like a student having mostly 5s and a few 4s gets an A. I like the idea Wormeli presents throughout the chapter which involves using a combination of both scales. The important thing to remember is students are learning to master the subject and more often than not come to class without mastery. When determining a student’s grade that fact should be taken into consideration.

Chapter 13 presented multiple ways to set up a grade book. I felt that the key point to this section is being flexible with how you set up a grade book. It is important to remember that different situations in the classroom could call for a different method of recording information. In addition it is important for a teacher to record as much information as he/she can on a grade. A plain C would not tell how well a student mastered a topic. If the teacher would instead say that the student does well on this topic but struggles on this topic, more understanding of the student’s mastery is revealed. Chapter 14 follows with a description on handling report cards. I thought the best strategy listed was including multiple categories in one subject. There have been multiple times throughout this course and readings that indicate a simple letter grade does not accurately reflect all that a student does in the classroom. It is critical that students, parents and administrators understand the multi-dimensional aspects of learning. Last time I checked a letter does not tell a student what they excelled at, what they struggled with, or what they could improve on.